

Title: Against the Orcs Pt II

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Part II: Amongst the Orcs I slid the small communications crystal back into a pouch at my belt, and lit my pipe. Gonick, the esteemed healer, was heading for Cove on horseback. Without access to my scrolls and magical items, there was no way that I could open up a gate to Cove; and Gonick had never been here. He'd purchased a map from a mutual friend from Moonglow, and was making his way.

This gave me time to prepare, needed time. I left my rented tavern room and found the captain of the guard. "Ah, yes, Garrett." He said, while clutching a wretched and filthy beggar about the neck using platemail gloved hands.

He casually assaulted the man for a while. I watched, uninterested. A mongbat circled overhead, cackled an almost-unheard squeal.

The guard captain then kicked the man squarely in the groin and left him to whimper on the ground with a stolen and sodden leg of rancid mutton still gripped under his reeking arm.

"Mr. Granth, a Mr.

Syleo is here to see you.
My best man. Trained
in the Tukuno Islands, he
says. Good with a pike!"

The captain stopped,
opened the door to the
guard tower. Kneeling in
the floor was a man,
red-haired, tall and broad,
wearing the odd metal
armor of the Tukuno
Islands, the Do and... well,
I couldn't remember the
names of the other
parts.

He pulled an odd,
double-ended pike-like
weapon off the floor and
bowed slightly towards me
with a hard, stern look I
did not care for. I
returned the gesture and
this seemed to placate
him, softening his
features to a less
homicidal look.

"You are Mr. Garrett
Granth. The publisher,
author, and adventurer."
He said.

"Yes, that would be me.
And you are Mr. Syleo."

"Just Syleo." He
replied. "I assume we
are not assaulting the
orc fort alone?" "No."
I answered. "We are
waiting for a healer, one
of the best. Then we'll
need a good boat pilot to
get us to the fort. I
did some reconnaissance
earlier today and..."
"...and you found that
the orcs have barricaded
the small strip of land
that leads to their
fortress, I know. They're
preparing for war, Mr.
Granth." Syleo said.

I sighed. "Not war,
Syleo. This is something

else. Something orcish.
The blood war.” “I am
not familiar with the
concept, Mr. Granth.
How do you know so
much about the orcs?”

I hung my head.
“That.” I said. “Is
a long story.”

“Tell me.” Syleo said.
He had moved between me
and the door. “I must
know about the ones with
whom I fight.”

YEARS AGO: The
Wastes of Caina

“And my knight captures
your pawn. It’s freezing
here, Garrett. Platemail
is not a good insulator.”

Annunzio said. He was
a tall fighter, rugged,
good-looking, and blonde,
with short hair and a
good natured smile.

“Yeah, well, I told you
to wear something
warm.” I said.
“Doesn’t bother these
undead, though.” Annunzio
peered out over the
broad expanse of ice.
We were hunkered behind
a bit of jagged stone
outcropping, a volcanic
overgrowth, and the wind
howled around us. A
walrus was above us, and
we were looking over the
blubbery creature.

I turned back to the
chessboard. We had our
campsite set, trying to
keep out the cold and
keep our fingers unfrozen
so that we would be
ready to describe the
battle as it unfolded.

“Your move.” I said
after a few clunks
across the wood.

“That's the place.”
Annunzio said. “That's where the battle is supposed to take the place. The Order of the Ebon Skull will be defending their home turf, I doubt the Lightbringers are going to be able to get in and get towards the lich king.”

“Check.” Annunzio said.

“You there!” A voice howled from above us. There was a skull-faced necromancer leading a towering deamon that stood on the ledge.

“Oh, hello.” I said.
“We're here from the Britannia Publishing Company. War reporters.”

“Looks like 'ummies to me!” An arriving orc said.

“Oh, well, yes.
Hummies. Indeed.”
Annunzio said. “But we're not here with the Lightbringers.”“Can't stand them, myself.” I said.
“Over-bearing halfwitted honor-bound bunch, really.” Annunzio said. He had his book and pen out. The ink had frozen, so he held the pot above the candle. “And you are?” He asked the orc.

“Grishnak. Lord of ORC!” He said proudly.
“Should I correct his grammar?” Annunzio asked me.

“No.” I said. “Adds a certain flavor.”

"I think they're a distraction!" The necromancer hissed. Another undead had arrived, a skeleton with glowing eye sockets and an array of blades.

Another necromancer showed up. And another. In a few moments we were completely surrounded.

"I think we should make them fight to the death! I think we should burn them! I think we should gut them and feed their entrails to the gulls!"

As the gathered wicked men made their horrible suggestions, there was a cry to the East, and we could hear explosions, blade on bone, and howls of battle.

"They've attacked!" The Order soldiers shouted as they ran towards the fray.

"Ho ho hooo! Hah hah hah!" The orc Grishnak was laughing, he slapped his thighs and seemed at the edge of tears.

"Good distraction, hummies! Not even trying and you fool no-brained undead! Here! You come sometime and you learn 'bout orcs! We teach you clumping!" With that, he threw a rune onto the ground, then turned away and howled, running into battle.
"Do you think that's a trap?" Annunzio asked.

"No." I said. "I think it's very up front about the fact that they will probably try and kill us."

"Well, in that case, if it's all the same to you, I think I'll just... stay here." Annunzio said.

"Oh, I'm not going now." I said, clutching my hat against my head to keep out the cold. My boots were the only thing keeping my feet from falling off. "We've got a war to report on."

"Yes, that fellow there just got disemboweled. This is going pretty poorly for the forces of good." Annunzio said.

"Well, keep in mind that we owe a lot of money and are wanted for a lot of varied crimes, Annunzio." I said, looting one of the fallen paladins.

"We'd better get out of here before someone thinks we're here for the battle." Annunzio said.

"The rune?" I asked.

"The rune."

TO BE CONTINUED.

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